# THE

# RURAL DISTRICT OF ELY

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## ANNUAL REPORT

for the year

1958



by

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# RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF ELY

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1958

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 1958.

1. STATISTICS:

During 1958 the usual statistics have been kept and are available. These are not included in my Report.

2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES:

(a) Ambulances.- Two ambulances are stationed at Ely, both being operated by the Isle of Ely County Council.

The Littleport St. John Ambulance continues to work under the agency agreement with the County Council. This vehicle, which serves the local area, and those areas adjoining when necessary, continues to be of the greatest value.

The Ely and Littleport St. John Divisions continue to provide ambulance attendants. As in the past, these duties are carried out in the members' "spare time" in addition to their ordinary daily work. Sometimes I think members of the public are apt to overlook this fact; although many do express their gratitude and thanks.

(b) Nursing and Clinic Arrangements.- These are the same as for previous years. The District Nurses continue to give cheerfully their invaluable services to those needing their help.

2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES (Contd.)

(c) Hospitals.-

(i) Tower Hospital for Chronic Sick.
(ii) St. John's Hospital for Infectious Diseases and Long-stay cases.
(iii) The Grange Maternity Home.

These Hospitals are under the control of the Regional Hospital Board.

3. WATER:

(a) (i) The supply for the district is drawn from two chalk wells at West Row. During 1958 water supplies of adequate quantity and quality have been maintained.

(ii) There have been no major breakdowns during the year.

(b) (i) The Chloramine Plant has been in use continually and has proved satisfactory. The chloramine process permits of the treatment of the water at the source.

(ii) The usual chemical and bacteriological examinations were made during the year and proved satisfactory. In addition, all new mains are sampled and no connections are made until the reports on these samples are found satisfactory.

(iii) During the year the improvement to the Witchford and Wentworth supplies was completed.

(iv) There is an abundant supply of pure water available, and at no time has it been necessary to restrict supplies, notwithstanding the insufficient storage capacity.

The increasing demands on the water supplies make two tasks more imperative than ever. I refer to the urgency of providing additional water storage, and also the laying of increased capacity or duplication of pumping mains.

3. WATER (Contd.)

(b) (v) The water has no plumbo-solvent action.

(vi) Referring to the general supply of water to houses in the area, it is estimated that between 98-99% of houses are covered.

I am certain that a very high standard of coverage for a rural area is maintained in the Council's District.

There have been no other extensions during the year.

4. SEWAGE:

(a) Unsatisfactory conditions in the District, to which I have made many previous references, continue to exist; but, although there have been no major advances during the year, it must be remembered that every advance entails much technical planning and detail in its earlier stages, not so apparent to those who are not actually involved.

(b) During the summer the final stages of the Sutton scheme went to tender, and these were approved at the end of the year.

Plans for Stretham are now awaiting the results of technical planning etc., although the apparent position remains unchanged. It will be a great relief to me to see a start made in this village.

Conversions covering the provision of baths, water-closets and hot water have been commenced in 36 houses at Sutton. This is the first instalment of a 3 year programme for 170 houses in the District.

The House Purchase and Housing Bill made a welcome appearance at the end of the year. When this goes onto the Statute Book it will enable this work to be grant-aided for houses erected before 1945.

5. HOUSING:

Permanent Housing:

| | |
|---|---|
| No. of dwellings completed during 1958 | 18 |
| No. of dwellings provided under Housing Acts to 31st December 1958 | 1504 |
| No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1958 | Nil |

The Council have commenced improving pre-war Council houses by the provision of bathrooms, water-closets and hot water supplies. 16 houses were so improved during 1958.

Temporary Housing:

| | |
|---|---|
| No. of converted ex-service huts occupied at 31st December 1958 | 36 |

Private Enterprise:

New Permanent Houses:

| | |
|---|---|
| No. of dwellings completed during 1958 | 18 |
| No. of dwellings completed since April 1945 | 274 |
| No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1958 | 17 |

Subsidised Provision and Improvement of Dwellings

Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958: Section 46 - New Dwellings for Agricultural Workers - £10 or £15 per annum for 40 years from Completion.

| | |
|---|---|
| No. of dwellings completed during 1958 | 1* |
| No. of dwellings completed since April 1945 | 34* |
| No. of dwellings completed since 1938 (commencement of scheme) | 59 |

* These figures are included in numbers under heading "New Permanent Houses" above.

5. HOUSING (Contd.)

Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958: Section 30 - Dwellings Improved or Provided by Conversion of Buildings with aid of Improvement Grant.

| | | Schemes | Dwellings |
|---|---|---|---|
| No. of schemes approved for grant and | In 1958* | 8 | 13 |
| No. of dwellings to be provided or improved | Since 1949 ‡ | 147 | 182 |
| Amount of Grant involved by approved schemes | Since 1949 | £44,882:10: 5 | |
| | In 1958 | £3,184: 10: 0 | |

| | | Schemes | Dwellings |
|---|---|---|---|
| No. of schemes completed and | In 1958 | 20 | 26 |
| No. of dwellings provided or improved | Since 1949 | 144 | 178 |
| Amount of Grant paid | In 1958 | £6,909:14: 0 | |
| | Since 1949 | £43,837: 0: 5 | |

*Owing to the high rate of interest on loans required to make grants, approval of schemes has been suspended since February 1958.

‡Grant provisions enacted in 1949.

6. SCHOOLS:

I have no comments this year.

7. MILK:

During the year most of the milk sold in the District has been either pasteurised, or T.T., or both. A very small quantity has been produced by persons keeping one or two cows.

Whereas in the past I have drawn attention to the difficulty in controlling this small volume of raw milk, notification has been received in November of the Ministry's intention of bringing the District within the ambit of the Special Designations Specified Areas Order. This will be of very material assistance in eliminating the small, careless cow keeper.

At the same time the enforcement of the Milk & Dairies Regulations (1949) and also the co-operation of retailers and their employees must be emphasised.

I still find it necessary to draw attention to the misuse of milk bottles by a few of the public for fluids other than milk. A very deplorable and disgusting practice.

Also, for very obvious reasons, I do wish the public would abandon the beastly habit of leaving empty milk bottles on the pavement outside houses.

8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES:

(a) 144 notifications of infectious diseases were received. The total being made up as follows :

| | |
|---|---|
| Scarlet Fever | 7 |
| Measles | 115 |
| Pneumonia | 7 |
| Erysipelas | 3 |
| Food Poisoning | 8 |
| Whooping Cough | 2 |
| Puerperal Pyrexia | 1 |
| Infective Hepatitis | 1 |
| | 144 |

8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES (Contd.)

(b) Disinfection of premises, etc. is regularly carried out in cases of notifiable disease; also when infection is reported or requests are received for any special reasons.

(c) I deplore any decrease in the vaccination of children against Small Pox, and their immunization against Diphtheria.

Fortunately no case of Diphtheria has occurred in the District, but immunity can only be assured in the future when every child is immunized in infancy.

(d) Tuberculosis:

3 new cases were notified during the year. After making the necessary adjustments there are now the following numbers on the Register :

| Respiratory | | Non-Respiratory | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 34 | Males | 4 |
| Females | 25 | Females | 7 |

Compared with 1957, the figures shew a decrease of 7 cases.

9. FOOD:

The following is a list of food handling premises in the area :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (i) | Butchers | 15 |
| | Bakers | 7 |
| | Fish Shops | 5 |
| | Grocery and General Food Stores | 53 |
| | Cafes | 2 |

9. FOOD (Contd.)

(ii) 44 premises are registered for the storage and sale of ice cream.

Dairies registered under the Milk & Dairies Regulations 1949 - 1954 = 3.

There is no ice cream manufactured for sale in the area.

Food Hygiene:

Despite some improvement, the position of food hygiene cannot yet be said to be satisfactory in the District.

Satisfactory conditions will only come about by the co-operation of food handlers and their employees, or by the prosecution of offenders, whether employers or employees.

Surely willing co-operation is to be preferred to prosecution ?

Advice from the Public Health Inspector or myself is always available when it is requested. In addition, useful booklets on the subject (for example, "Clean Catering" obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office for 2/6d.) are available.

I beg of those responsible for the handling of food, whether employer or employee, to take my remarks very seriously. For some, attention to this vital subject may obviate unpleasant proceedings in the future.

The Public Health Inspector and I do all that is possible, and the Inspector's efforts especially have been invaluable.

In one instance the occurrence of an outbreak of Salmonella Infection among those associated with a food shop necessitated formal action under the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations, 1953. This entailed the exclusion of those suffering from the infection from handling any food for human consumption. The steps taken by all concerned were sufficient, I am pleased to report, to prevent any spread of the infection, and a potentially dangerous situation was prevented from developing.

10. MISCELLANEOUS:

(a) Rodent Control.- During the year the Public Health Inspector and the Rodent Officer have done 822 Inspections, which include 496 dwelling houses and business premises and 326 agricultural premises; 707 treatments, including re-treatments, have been carried out.

(b) Moveable Dwellings.- Existing legislation continues to render abortive any real constructional efforts in dealing with this problem. Sometime in the future trouble will develop, I am sure, unless more practical legislation is enacted.

(c) Factories Act.- There is no great problem here as only one factory of any size exists in the District. The position generally is reviewed, however, from time to time.

(d) Slaughter-houses.- The position remains the same as in my Report for 1955, and I have no further comments to offer this year.

(e) Clean Air.- In a rural area pollution from smoke coming from chimneys, industrial or domestic, is not a material problem.

There is one danger which is becoming increasingly urgent and evil with every passing month. I refer to the foul clouds of stinking black fumes which are discharged continuously from the exhausts of the many diesel-engined lorries and trucks.

To those of us who are daily on the road in our cars, especially when trapped by one of these monstrosities on a narrow road for some distance, this evil is apparent by the headache and nausea which is often produced by these foul clouds. It is not appreciated by many, moreover, that fumes can be blown through open windows into dwelling houses.

I am informed that if diesel engines are properly adjusted the emission of foul and black smoke from exhausts is not necessary. In my opinion it is high time that these adjustments were made and maintained.

10. MISCELLANEOUS (Contd.)

(e) Clean Air (Contd.)

I am further informed that there are in existence regulations referring to the Construction and Use of Motor Vehicles, and it appears to me that action by the appropriate authority under such regulations should be taken without delay to prevent this increasing peril caused by the discharge of carcinogenic substances by some motor vehicles on the highway.

My remarks here are amply substantiated by the findings of the Beaver Committee on Air Pollution reporting in 1954. Paragraphs 64 - 67 of this Report are, in fact, exceedingly pertinent, and should be carefully studied by those concerned with the mitigation, if not abolition, of this danger. I would draw attention in particular to Paragraph 67, which cites the relevant Regulations concerning motor vehicle exhausts. The Committee remarks: "the present law on the subject is explicit and in our view adequate." Again later on in the same paragraph it states: "There, however, is the law, and we would press that it should be enforced in the future."

Even if tobacco smoke is proved to be carcinogenic (cancer-producing) this cannot in any way justify disregard of the added danger of diesel fumes - two blacks never make a white!

11. PERSONAL:

To my colleagues in the Office - Mr.Wickens, Mr.Parr, Mr.Jones and his staff, Mr.Arnold Cross, Mr.Burtt and his staff: I once again, and with great pleasure, give my warmest thanks for all their advice and help during the year, which has, as usual, increased the interest and pleasure in my Public Health work.

I have the honour to be,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

K. S. MAURICE-SMITH,

Medical Officer of Health,
Ely Rural District Council.